

**Muslim Art:  
Moroccan Zellige Tile**

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Santa Maria, CA

# Moroccan Zellige Tile

**Standards Addressed:** CA HSS 7.2.4 – Discuss the expansion of Muslim rule through military conquests and treaties, emphasizing the cultural blending within Muslim civilization and the spread and acceptance of Islam and the Arabic language

CA HSS 7.2.6 – Understand the intellectual exchanges among Muslim scholars of Eurasia and Africa and the contributions Muslim scholars made to later civilizations in the areas of science, geography, mathematics, philosophy, medicine, art, literature.

**Background Information for Educators:** This lesson plan is designed to fit into a larger unit on Islam, and it is useful if students have a basic understanding of the geography and climate of this area. Knowledge of the religion, as well as how Islam spread in the 2 centuries following its foundation should be addressed prior to this lesson as well. Students should know that an important concept for Islam is the exclusion of pictures, statues, or other representations of humans in religious artwork, as this takes away the glory of Allah.

**Estimated Timeline:** 2 days (50 minute periods)

**Supplies Needed:** assortment of permanent markers; [white 4x4 tile](#); information sheet (see below)

**Anticipatory Set:** Where might you find tile in a typical American home? **Answers may include: kitchen, bathroom, laundry room, floor, wall, by the fireplace.**

Why are tiles put in those areas? **To keep things dry, cool, or to make things look pretty**

How do tiles feel when you touch them? **Cool.**

Why might tiles be a good way to build a home in the Middle East/North Africa? **It's hot in those places, so tiles keep things cool.**

**Review questions:** Why aren't there any pictures or statues of Prophet Muhammad or other important people in Islam? **Because it is not allowed, it can take away the glory of Allah. They do not worship people, only Allah.**

-Guide students to the realization that since statues/pictures of people are not permitted in Islam, one way to decorate mosques, homes, and other buildings was to use calligraphy and geometric patterns. Tell students that they will be learning how to make these kinds of patterns.

-Show students this video on Arabic tile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pg1NpMmPv48>

-Show students pictures of Moroccan zellige tiles, such as these (photos by Deanna Jones):



-Ask students review questions: What are the essential tools to create geometric designs? When beginning your geometric design, how are circles first divided? Why are construction lines important?

-Give students 5 minutes to write down 5 sentences on their sheet, about zellige tiles. Then, using the same page, guide them in creating some construction lines. Remind students that construction lines are just to help them. Construction lines can be erased later.

-Once students have drawn construction lines, and have erased or added lines, they can begin their real tile.

**Helpful tips for working with tile:** I would recommend students draw their lines in pencil first. Dull pencils seem to work best for this. I have students trace the lines in black permanent marker. But tell them to be careful, as the black ink can mix with the other colors they use, if they are not careful. One great thing about this project is that permanent marker is erasable on tile!

**Examples of completed tiles (photos by Deanna Jones):**



LEFT: completed tiles done by students RIGHT: Close-up of a completed tile

**Extension Ideas:** Students can explore the connection between Moroccan zellige tiles and those seen in southern Spain and Latin America.

